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# FRANCE AND THE TREATY

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IN what spirit does France look upon the peace treaty? And in what light does France look upon America?

I want to set down the answer to these two questions with perfect freedom, truth and independence.

For those whose privilege it is to wield a pen, there is no finer task than that of ever seeking truth, pursuing it in the midst of passions and prejudices, trying to seize it, and showing it in the full light of the sun fearlessly, without hesitation or false shame.

France, who has hundreds of faults but at least one quality—that of clearness—was of the opinion at the time of the armistice that there could be one of two treaties: either a Wilsonian treaty, that is, a treaty embodying an abstract ideal, or a Napoleonic treaty, that is, a treaty of practical force.

Each of them had advantages and disadvantages. The Wilsonian treaty amounted to practically the following: "Let us forget hate, ill-feeling and dissension; let us bring together all the peoples of the earth. On the ruins around us, let us build up a new humanity. Let all nations associate in a common effort. Let nothing remain that may divide them or that may set one of them against the other." Practically, as regards France and Germany, it came to about the following: "Little or no indemnity to be paid by Germany for reparation, because an indemnity, however it may be qualified, is irritating to the party who has to pay it. No penalties for the Kaiser, his ministers or his generals, because a penalty, whatever be its motive, is humiliating for the nation whose citizens are judged and punished. No annexation of territory of any kind, even colonial territory, because annexation, for whatever cause,

contains the germ of future wars. Few or no guarantees, such as the occupation of the left bank of the Rhine, because such occupations give rise to deep and bitter feelings which rankle for years. The immediate or almost immediate admission of Germany to the Society of Nations, for there are no vanquished and no victors: there are only members of the great human family who, after separation, now come together again to form but one body."

Such a treaty—why deny it?—had certain advantages: it was something new—something unique in the history of the world; it satisfied that yearning for generosity and idealism which has tormented humanity for twenty centuries, and seemingly it could give no occasion for feelings of revenge or anger. It had its disadvantages: it shocked one's sense of justice, which in the heart of man is at least as strong as idealism, and which cannot tolerate that the murderer and the victim, the robber and the robbed, should leave court side by side in brotherly fashion; it overlooked the lessons taught by history and the teachings of philosophy which prove that forgiveness and kindness are not always the best means of establishing order and peace in the world.

But in any case, such a treaty had the merit of being clear and of resting upon a system. In France, every Socialist and a certain number of men of intellect were in favor of it.

The other treaty, the Napoleonic treaty, stated as follows: "An unprecedented crime has been committed against civilization, against the right of nations, against humanity. It has been committed by a race who has other dark deeds to its credit, who stealthily and slowly prepared for aggression, and whose dream it is to dominate and subdue the world. The punishment must fit the crime. The guilty nation shall be placed where it cannot wreak harm for several generations. It shall be tamed, broken in by forcible means and put under perpetual surveillance." Practically, as regards France and Germany, it came to saying the following: "Germany shall pay to the last penny what she owes France for her devastations, for the war she imposed upon her, for the expenses she was obliged to incur, even though the sum should total into the hundreds of billions, even though it should take hundreds of years

to settle the amount. Germany shall give back without distinction all the territory wrested by her in the course of her history. Germany, whose imperial 'unity' was achieved by warfare on the ruins of France, shall lose that unity, which threatens the peace of the world. She shall return to the condition she was in before the war of 1870, that is, she shall be parcelled out in a number of different countries: Bavaria, Wurtemberg, Saxony, Prussia, etc., who shall no longer have the right of arraying themselves in league against the world. The work of Bismarck shall thus be destroyed. Furthermore, guarantees shall be taken to prevent the return of similar calamities: the Rhine, sole geographical and military frontier allowing the Barbarians to be kept under observation and within bounds, shall be perpetually occupied by troops belonging to the civilized nations of the earth or by their representatives on the spot: France and Belgium. Finally, Germany shall not be received into the Society of Nations until she shall have become worthy of it, that is, only after she has atoned, after she has redeemed herself and shown by a long term of good conduct that nothing remains in her of the predatory instinct."

Such a treaty—who can deny it?—had also its advantages and disadvantages. Undoubtedly, it was a treaty that had to be imposed and enforced by strength. Undoubtedly, it made it imperative that the entire world should always be stronger than Germany, even as the tamer must always be stronger than the wild beast he is taming; but it guaranteed the world against the repetition of such a war as we have just suffered; it established the supremacy of civilization over scientific barbarism; on the whole, it did not call for such a considerable effort on the part of the tamer, since the teeth and claws of the beast had been drawn for all time. Such a treaty also had the advantage of being clear, logical and all of a piece.

Now, if we take the treaty that was signed at Versailles on the 28th of June, 1919, we find that it does not come under the head of either of the two treaties we have just examined. It is neither Wilsonian nor Napoleonic, neither one thing nor the other. It is a compromise between the principle of idealism and the principle of strength, the principle of punishment and the principle of forgiveness,

that is, between fire and water, between night and day. At least, such is the feeling of Frenchmen of every party and of every shade of opinion. Socialists look upon it as "a treaty made by capitalists and imperialists." The bourgeoisie thinks of it as "a treaty of concession to visions and internationalism." No one will recognize it as his child. Even those who declare they are ready to adopt it—and that is the case of the majority of Frenchmen—deplore that it bears such or such a disfiguring mark, such or such a flaw which threatens to cripple it for ever.

Let us take the question of reparation. The treaty, it is true, provides that Germany is to repair the ruins of Northern France and of Belgium, that she is to pension the widows and orphans; but the tremendous cost of the war—a war, let us remember, that was forced upon France—remains for her to pay. Thus, in order to fight for her life and for civilization, France has contracted a debt of sixty-five billion dollars. Of this she may possibly collect about twenty billions, but the remainder she will have to stand, though it should mean her ruin. Neither idealism nor a sense of justice can be satisfied with this. Justice demanded that Germany should pay all she owes, though it should take five hundred years. Idealism might be justified in making her pay nothing, so that no hatred should remain and grow between the two countries, but to make Germany pay 20 billion dollars will exasperate her almost as much as to ask her to pay 65,—and it will leave France ruined.

Now for the question of guarantees. The treaty does call for interallied occupation of the left bank of the Rhine and of its bridges for 15 years, with the right of extending the time limit and reoccupying the territory. It does stipulate that the military forces of Germany shall be reduced to an army of 200,000 men. It does provide that the military frontier of Germany shall extend to 50 kilometers on the east of the Rhine, and that Germany shall not be allowed to have any fortifications on this side of that frontier, nor to assemble, maintain or drill armed troops. But who can guarantee that after fifteen years, when the Allies have left, and the French have returned to France, these provisions shall be lived up to? Who can guarantee that if, in 1950, America and Europe hear that garrisons have

been organized in the Palatinate or bulwarks built around Coblenz, they shall send their troops forward and declare war, as is provided by Articles 42 and 44, so as to drive out the garrisons and overthrow the bulwarks? Who can guarantee that the German army shall not be secretly increased beyond the 200,000 allowed? Napoleon also claimed that he had enclosed the Prussian army within a narrow circle, and yet, unknown to him, in spite of the fact that his armies were occupying Germany, the Prussian army broke through that narrow circle. Here again, the treaty is a source of irritation and vexation to Germany, lays obligations on the Allies and gives neither France nor the world those lasting guarantees of peace they had a right to expect.

Shall we now examine the question of the League of Nations? The treaty does not give birth to a true League of Nations with a charter, court, army, police, and means of coercion. As a matter of fact it constitutes little more than a debating Society. The covenant is not a social contract, but merely the by-laws of a club. The two parts of the structure which have been given the largest development are the committee room and writing room. There will be much talk, much writing, but little or no action. There will be no means of action: no force, no international police to see that the decisions of the League are carried out. Leon Bourgeois had asked that there should at least be an international organ for the purpose of examining certain contingencies and preparing certain measures in written form. He was told that the mere fact of considering the possibility of war might bring about such a war. In like manner, certain natives of our distant colonies have always refused to place lightning-conductors on the top of their dwellings because they claim it would attract thunderbolts! So the League of Nations does not secure peace and justice for the world: it merely provides for lengthy talks, at its meetings, on peace and justice. It does not give satisfaction to those who dreamed of constituting a great federation of the civilized Powers of the world. It does not convince those who believe, with history to back them, that men will always be men, and that as long as there are races who prey on others, there will be warfare.

I could go on ad infinitum to show that the treaty of Versailles does not fully satisfy any Frenchmen; neither

the dreamers of the extreme Left, nor the imperialists of the extreme Right, nor the practical minds of the Centre. Above all, it does not satisfy that love of clearness, logic and common sense which lies at the very core of French minds. It is full of complications and delays. It has been necessary to publish a special pamphlet simply to enumerate the long series of dates of the various stages of execution.

However, such as it is, with all its contradictions, dangers and confusion, France accepts this treaty. She accepts it, because one part of it puts an end to a great injustice: Alsace-Lorraine is given back to France, and she is once again whole. She accepts it, because one other point of it opens to France every hope and every possibility: the treaty of Algeciras is repealed as well as the treaty of Frankfurt, and Morocco is given unconditionally and unreservedly to France. Now, Morocco has a tremendous development and enormous resources. There, perhaps, lies the chance that will save France from being crippled under the burden of her financial debt and the weight of her ruins.

And then France possesses an inexhaustible fund of philosophy and common sense. Her philosophy tells her that perfect justice, like perfect happiness, is not of this world. Her common sense reminds her that if she is victorious, she did not win alone. She feels obliged therefore to accept the cooperation of the Allies who won with her. The peace treaty does not belong to her alone; it also belongs to America, England, Italy. It is a collective treaty, just as the war was a collective war.

So even if the peace which this treaty gives us is a peace bringing with it heavy burdens, dangerous weaknesses and the pressing necessity of working and watching, it is none the less peace with honor and with hope!

Now that I have stated clearly and simply what France thinks of the peace treaty, I would like to state just as clearly and simply what France thinks of the United States in connection with the peace treaty.

There is no need for me to enter into the feeling of France for America: it is compounded of affection, gratitude and admiration. France has a profound love for her

sister beyond the Ocean; she will never forget that America helped her to win the war; she admires the latter's youthful energy and marvelous efficiency. Petty friction, slight misunderstanding, can never alter one great fact: that twice the two nations have fought side by side for the noblest of causes. Their blood has been shed together and their hearts shall ever beat in unison.

But if France loves and admires America, she does not always claim to understand her.

After the armistice, France heard America, or a great part of America, preaching to her the virtues of moderation, generosity, burying of race hatred, and conciliation among nations, for the sake of the future happiness of America. France very well knew that this was disinterested language, and she yielded to it. The moderation of the treaty towards Germany, the consideration which has been shown the aggressors of 1914, is all due to America's action at the Peace Conference.

But when at that same Conference, the question of the relations of other nations besides France and Germany came up, when the rights of another than the German race were dealt with, American principles underwent a sudden change. When, for instance, in April, Japan asked for the insertion in the preliminary project of the League of Nations of a simple sentence proclaiming the equality of every nation, the American delegation met the request with a peremptory "No!"

There, France fails to understand. If America asks for the admission of guilty Germany into the League of Nations on an absolutely equal footing, how can America object to the admission of guiltless Japan on the same equal footing? If America cannot lay aside a certain distrust and prejudice towards a country with which she has never been at war, which has never invaded her territory, never laid waste her soil, how can she ask France, assaulted, trampled on, half strangled by Germany, to forget her feelings, her rancor, her hatred? What distinguishes the races of the earth is not the more or less blue blood in their veins, but their manner of conducting themselves, their degree of civilization, the more or less respect they have for their word, their conception of honor. From this point of view, what can Japan be reproached with? Can there be urged



against her one hundredth part of what can be proved against Germany? So America—or a part of America—is also prejudiced against another great nation, and her prejudice is a hundred times less justified than that of France against Germany.

And then, when the question of guarantees was brought up at the Conference and there was submitted the remarkable document drawn up on the 10th of January, 1919, by Marshal Foch, asking for the permanent occupation of the left bank of the Rhine and its bridges by Allied troops, the President of the United States sided against the best military judge of France, and refused to give the project America's adhesion. It was at this point that there was substituted for the Foch memorandum what has been called the Franco-Anglo-American pact, that is, a promise made to France that if she was ever attacked by Germany, England and America would immediately send to her help their military forces. For nearly every Frenchman, such a guarantee is sufficient. It is every bit as good as the guarantee Foch wanted. It is of such a nature as to cause Germany to pause and reflect, should she feel inclined once more to become aggressive. But now that same guarantee, suggested by the American delegation, is being opposed by certain elements in America.

Again, France fails to understand. France has nothing to do with Republicans or Democrats in America; she recognizes, and only can recognize, Americans. If she is refused the guarantees asked for by her, because such guarantees are a source of displeasure to some; if she is refused the guarantees that the President of the United States offered her personally, because they do not suit others, what *are* the guarantees she is to have or take? Must France suffer the consequences because Americans disagree? Is she not entitled to ask them to call a truce on the question of home politics, so that she may obtain the security she has a right to expect? When two drivers fight, is it fair that those inside the car should receive the blows?

I am asking these questions in all simplicity and frankness, in the first place because a great many people in France are asking them, and in the second place because,

knowing all that is in America's heart for France, I know the answer beforehand.

When Gabriel Hanotaux had the honor of being received in Paris by President Wilson, he said to him:

"We cannot offer every year to the world a battle of the Marne."

It is the plain truth. And neither can we offer to the world the sacrifices which followed the battle of the Marne. The security of France is therefore the condition of the peace and liberty of the world. To give that security is to provide for the security of civilized Europe and of America.

And we have something else to ask of America in her own interest and in the interest of the world. We have to ask her to accept one of the mandates she has been earnestly tendered, either for Constantinople or Armenia.

In the offer of a mandate, America only sees Europe's somewhat selfish desire to involve her in European affairs. She is afraid of being caught in a maze of intrigues and difficulties. She fears far-off complications which are foreign to her. But the question is a nobler and bigger one.

America has an admirable fund of energy. She holds the secret of what is finest in our modern times: how to do big things quickly. She has youth and power and wealth and efficiency. In Europe, we are old, poor, weakened and divided. What we ask is not so much that America should give us of her strength, of her money or of her materials, as that she should set us an example.

And what an example if America were to accept a mandate for Constantinople! It is one of the wonder cities of Europe and of the world, the gem of the Orient, and after twenty centuries of European civilization, it remains a stronghold of corruption and dirt. Every one fights for the possession of its hills and roadstead and no one tries to make of it a great modern city, free from politics and international intrigues, that would become the luminous pole of Europe.

America alone can change Constantinople. America alone can go there without arousing distrust or jealousy. She alone can civilize the capital of Islam. For such a

task there is no need of regiments, soldiers or cannon. Only her engineers and builders are needed. A Hoover or a Davison would be sufficient. And America is full of Davisons and Hoovers.

If America accepts, she will be able to say that she has rendered humanity an unparalleled service and that she has played a great part in history. The youngest democracy of the world will have given a lesson to the secular nations of Europe. She will have shown that besides knowing how to fight, she also knows how to teach. She will have given the most magnificent example of disinterestedness in history. She will have furnished of her intellectual, material and moral superiority the best illustration, the most convincing of proofs. She will have set her mark on Europe for generations.

When Bonaparte arrived in Egypt, he showed the Pyramids of the Pharaohs to his soldiers and said to them: "Soldiers, remember that from the height of these pyramids forty centuries look down on you." A great many more centuries will look down on America from a far greater height if she turns Constantinople into a model city or makes of Armenia a free people.

To make beauty, goodness and liberty bloom where there are ugliness, turpitude and tyranny is a great deal more and a great deal better than to erect stones without souls one above the other. If George Washington could speak from the grave, he would not hesitate. Above tranquil selfishness he would place the duty of serving humanity—even though it be very far and very difficult.

STEPHANE LAUZANNE.